

Homily for the 2nd Sun. in Ord. "C"
Jan. 16-17, 2010.

As a young man, G. K. Chesterton entered an essay contest based on this passage, the miracle at Cana. He won the contest with a beautiful commentary on this scripture passage. I'd like to read you his entire essay, "The water looked up, to behold the face of its creator and blushed."

Chesterton was right to the point. There is something dynamic going on in this passage. It is a type of transformation which can only take place when there is loving trust. It is something best explained by images, art and poetry. It is almost impossible to describe scientifically.

That also is an apt definition of a sacrament. The classic definition of a sacrament is one that people over 40 probably know by heart. The Baltimore Catechism, defines it as "an outward sign, instituted by Christ, as a means of grace."

But the wedding at Cana is probably the best example to help us understand what a sacrament is and why we are a Sacramental Church.

Christ used this festive and happy occasion to perform his first miracle. He performed the miracle to insure that this happy occasion would not be spoiled. Joy, celebration, and dynamic transformation describe the relationship Jesus wants us to share with him.

Marriage is used many times in the scriptures to describe the Lord's relationship to us, the Church. The first reading tells us that God looks upon his people in the same

way as a bridegroom who delights in his virgin wife. The same delight and joy of a newly married couple is the delight and joy God has in us.

But, it is also true, that the same hurt and pain that a bride or a groom might feel when their spouse turns away from them or ignores them is how the Lord feels when we turn our back on him.

The marriage relationship is used by Christ to teach us, that God's love is real and personal. Our relationship with the Lord is as intimate and dynamic as the love we share with a spouse. It cannot be just theoretical or intellectual. It is as passionate as young lovers. It is as intimate as Old lovers.

Like a marriage relationship, it is something we invest ourselves in, learning to be sensitive and careful in the way we respond to him. God himself reminds us that he is a jealous God. He is not satisfied with half hearted love.

For any love relationship to work, it must be rooted in faith and trust. If we have faith in another, we are willing to risk trusting them, only then can we really love them.

But it is difficult for us to trust. If the others response could be predicted and guaranteed, there would be no risk, there would be no need to trust, the relationship would simply be a contract and there would be no love at all.

Once we begin to explore the dynamics of married love, we can understand why faith and belief are so difficult at times. It is not easy for us to trust, even if we are asked to trust God himself. It is not easy for us to take a risk, even if Christ himself has pledged his faithfulness. It is not easy to make a commitment even if our happiness and satisfaction depends on it.

This is why we struggle when we are asked to believe in the Gospel, and to trust that the Church teaches truth and wisdom. Our first instinct is to say, “prove it to me” or “give me a guarantee.”

Yet, still, Christ invites us to put our faith in him, to take the risk to love him. Our membership in the Church comes after our relationship with Christ, our marriage with Christ, just as a family comes after the risk and commitment of loving another. A Marriage which is not rooted in faith is no marriage at all.

The water looked upon the face of its creator, and changed forever, it became an instrument by which the Lord brought joy and announced the intimate presence of God.

This miracle took place in the context of a wedding party, because Jesus announced through the symbol of a marriage, his engagement to all people. In the midst of the joy and in the midst of friends, and love, he tells you and me, this is what I want for us.

When we are able to look upon the face of Christ and see not just a theory, or an idea, but know personally and intimately one who loves us, and one whose love will recreate us, then we also become a means by which Christ becomes known in the world, and through our lives, he rebuilds the fallen world.